

APR 20, 1998

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Annual Request for Nominations for Science Advisory Board (SAB)
Projects for FY 1999

TO: Assistant Administrators
Regional Administrators

The Administrator and I are committed to public health and environmental protection that is founded on the use of sound and credible science. Informed technical advice, coupled with objective, independent peer review of the scientific and technical basis of our actions, is critical to accomplishing our mission. Further, the Agency's dedication to credible, effective peer review is stated in the Agency's Peer Review Policy, full implementation of which remains an Agency-wide priority.

The purpose of this memorandum is further implementation of that Peer Review Policy by soliciting your requests for issues/documents to be brought before the Science Advisory Board (SAB) in Fiscal Year 1999.

As you know, the Agency and environmental decision making in general have undergone rapid change in recent years. In response to these developments, the SAB's Executive Committee held a retreat last November and concluded that the Board should alter its emphasis and operations.

I am pleased to report that the Board, under the direction of its new chair, Dr. Joan Daisey, has already begun to change its operations. The SAB intends to make changes along several lines simultaneously to:

1. Improve general operations. These changes include:
 - a. Improvement in the timeliness of reports, with a target of 2-4 months following a public meeting, achieved by an expedited report writing process and, on occasion, a new "fast track" process for special cases.
 - b. Greater attention to project selection, through the use of new project selection criteria (see criteria below).
 - c. Improved communication with customers, other organizations, and with new SAB members and SAB Committee Chairs.

2. Redirect, develop or modify some specific SAB elements. These changes include:
 - a. Re-directed focus of the Research Strategies Advisory Committee on the broad strategic aspects of research and science in the Agency.
 - b. Integration of economics expertise into the broader work of the Board.
3. Begin some new initiatives to meet the challenge of the Agency's own changes in environmental decision making. These changes include:
 - a. Selecting a few, strategic projects each year that focus on broad issues such as the role of science in "next generation" approaches to environmental protection.
 - b. "Catalyzing" the convening of workshops to address important, under-recognized scientific issues.
 - c. Exploring a broader range of social science involvement in SAB activities.
 - d. Experimenting with short summaries of its reports for non-technical audiences.
 - e. Considering a focus on international environmental issues.

The Administrator and I support the SAB's commitment to these changes in order to make a greater positive impact on how EPA conducts research and uses science to inform decisions and better protect the environment and public health. The Board's assistance not only helps the Agency to use science better, it also enhances the credibility to our efforts.

In recognition of the fact that the SAB cannot conduct every peer review at the Agency, the Board has adopted a set of criteria to help identify those projects that are best suited for SAB involvement. Therefore, in making recommendations for SAB involvement in projects in your program/region, please keep the following criteria in mind:

1. Meet key program needs:
 - a. Provide an opportunity to make a difference in the Agency's operations.
 - b. Support major regulatory or risk management initiatives.
 - c. Support strategic themes of current interest.
2. Meet key science needs:
 - a. Involve scientific approaches that are new to the Agency.
 - b. Deal with areas of substantial uncertainties.
3. Are environmentally significant:
 - a. Involve major environmental risks.
 - b. Relate to emerging environmental issues.
 - c. Exhibit a long-term outlook.

4. Have organizational significance:
 - a. Serve as a model for future Agency methods.
 - b. Require the commitment of substantial resources to scientific or technological development.
 - c. Transcend organizational boundaries, within or outside EPA or transcend international boundaries.
 - d. Strengthen the Agency's basic capabilities.

Later this spring you will receive a memo asking about all of the projects that you plan to peer review in FY 1999. I am decoupling the two requests so that the SAB will have sufficient time to consider carefully your requests and discuss them with me prior to the meeting of the SAB Executive Committee in July.

The attachment describes the information that you should supply for projects you propose for involvement of the SAB in FY99. Please submit your requests electronically using the **SAB project sheets** (attached and/or downloadable from www.epa.sab/sab) to the Science Advisory Board (SAB) at barnes.don@epa.gov by **May 22, 1998**.

/ S /

Fred Hansen
Deputy Administrator

Attachments

Attachment A

GUIDANCE ON REQUESTING AN SAB REVIEW IN FY 1999

SUMMARY:

The Science Advisory Board (SAB) is soliciting review proposals for projects for FY 1999. This attachment provides guidance to Programs and Regions to help them submit requests for SAB reviews. Requests should be submitted to the Science Advisory Board in both hard copy and electronic versions by May 22, 1998. The SAB will share the information the Peer Review Advisory Group (PRAG).

BACKGROUND:

A key priority for Administrator Browner is to base Agency actions on sound scientific data, analyses, and interpretations. She issued the Agency's Peer Review Policy to increase the quality of the technical foundations upon which EPA's regulatory structures are built. The SAB is a key scientific peer review mechanism available to Programs and Regions in implementing the Peer Review Policy. However, because the Board has finite resources it cannot conduct all reviews. This document is designed to help Programs and Regions determine which projects to submit to the SAB.

A brochure is attached (Attachment B-1) describing the structure and function of the SAB. Note particularly that the SAB focuses on the technical underpinnings of Agency positions; i.e., risk assessment issues, in contrast to risk management issues.

The topics that are best suited for the Board's agenda are those that satisfy several of the following criteria:

1. Meet key program needs:
 - a. Provide an opportunity to make a difference in the Agency's operations.
 - b. Support major regulatory or risk management initiatives.
 - c. Support strategic themes of current interest.
2. Meet key science needs:
 - a. Involve scientific approaches that are new to the Agency.
 - b. Deal with areas of substantial uncertainties.
3. Are environmentally significant:
 - a. Involve major environmental risks.
 - b. Relate to emerging environmental issues.
 - c. Exhibit a long-term outlook.
4. Have organizational significance:
 - a. Serve as a model for future Agency methods.

- b. Require the commitment of substantial resources to scientific or technological development.
- c. Transcend organizational boundaries, within or outside EPA or transcend international boundaries.
- d. Strengthen the Agency's basic capabilities.

In suggesting issues for SAB involvement in FY 1998, Programs and Regions should note the breadth of SAB activities:

Historically, most of the outputs of the Board are in the form of "full" reports. They present the findings of peer reviews of Agency document(s) and contain considerable detail about the findings and recommendations of the Board. They also address the specific questions posed by the Charge to the Board. "Letter" reports fulfill the same function as reports, but are simply shorter in length.

The SAB has also introduced the "Consultation" as a means of conferring--in public session--with the Agency on a technical matter before the Agency has begun substantive work on that issue. The goal is to leaven EPA's thinking on an issue by brainstorming a variety of approaches to the problem *very early* in the development process. There is no attempt or intent to express an SAB consensus or to generate an SAB report. The Board, via a brief letter simply notifies the Administrator that a Consultation has taken place.

More recently, the Board introduced a new vehicle for communicating with its clients -- the "Advisory" -- which provides, via a formal SAB consensus report, critical input on technical issues that arise *during* the Agency's issue development process. The Advisory generally involves a review of a multi-year Agency project. The intent is to provide some mid-course assessment to see if the Agency is heading in a scientifically credible direction. In order to maintain an objective, arms-length relation with the Agency and its projects, the SAB review of the final product at some point in the future will include experts who did not participate in producing the Advisory.

THE AGENDA SETTING PROCESS

Each Assistant Administrator and Regional Administrator is asked to submit a list of candidate topics for SAB action/review. Please prepare a "project sheet" (see Attachment B-2 as an example) for each topic that you wish to nominate for SAB review. The project sheet calls for the following information:

1. Project title/subject (Descriptive short title of project).
2. Requesting Organization/Office (Primary office requesting review, AA/RA level).

3. Requesting Official (Name and position of senior official requesting review, usually office or division level - this is the person who may receive a summary briefing from the Chair following the review).
4. Program Contact (Name/phone number/mail code - this is the principal contact for SAB Staff to interact with during development of the SAB review).
5. Background (brief history of the project and why it is important).
6. Tentative Charge (what the SAB is being asked to comment on - usually a set of questions).
7. Tentative Schedule and Committee (when the review is expected to be conducted, e.g., Winter 1999; and which SAB committee is appropriate for the review - the SAB may use a different Committee, if appropriate).
8. Budget Estimate (Rough estimates of Agency funding for the subject over the past 5 years (if applicable) and for the next 2 years (if applicable). The SAB Executive Committee has asked for this information to help it better appreciate the level of Agency involvement in and commitment to the issue).
9. Preparer (name, phone, office of preparer of Project Sheet and the date prepared).

The proposed topics will be examined throughout the late Spring and Summer, by the SAB Committees to schedule topics for review in FY 1999.

The project sheets should be submitted electronically to the SAB (barnes.don@epa.gov) and in signed hard copy (mail code 1400) by Friday, May 22, 1998. The electronic format of the information will facilitate generation of a read-only calendar of SAB activities for ready access by anyone in the Agency.

Attachment

B-2: Sample SAB Project Sheet

Attachment B-2:

**Science Advisory Board
Proposed Project**

Project title/subject: Proposed Amendments to the Risk Assessment Guidelines for Carcinogens

Requesting Organization/Office: Office of Research and Development (ORD)

Requesting Official: Dorothy Patton, Executive Director, Office of Science Policy

Program Contact: William Wood, Office of Research and Development, 202-260-6743

Background: EPA's Health Risk Assessment Guidelines provide generic science and science policy guidance on risk assessment issues for use in all Agency offices. EPA has currently issued or proposed nine guidelines (or amendments) in this series, all of which have been submitted to the Science Advisory Board for review.

The current guidelines for carcinogen risk assessment were reviewed by the SAB and issued as final guidance in 1986. In 1988, the Forum initiated a public process for considering amendments to these guidelines. A Risk Assessment Technical Panel considered submissions from the public as well as information developed by experts at two public workshops in revising these guidelines.

Tentative Charge: Review the amended and expanded guidance, with special emphasis on (a) weight-of-evidence issues, (b) a new classification system, (c) dose response modeling, and (d) the use of pharmacokinetic and metabolic data. A more detailed charge will be negotiated with SAB at a later date.

Tentative Schedule and Committee: Winter, 1998, Environmental Health Committee

Budget: FY 1995 - \$xxx and yy FTE
FY 1996 - \$xxx and yy FTE
FY 1997 - \$xxx and yy FTE
FY 1998 - \$xxx and yy FTE
FY 1999 - FY2000 - estimated costs of \$xxx and yy FTE each year

Preparer: Clare Stine, Risk Assessment Forum, 202-260-3824

Date: June 1, 1997

Proposed projects for involvement of the SAB in FY99 should be submitted using the SAB Project Sheet and sent electronically to the Science Advisory Board at barnes.don@epa.gov by May 22, 1998. See Attachment B-2 of the memo from Deputy Administrator Fred Hansen for a sample of a completed Project Sheet.

Science Advisory Board

Project Title/Subject:

Requesting Organization/Office:

Requesting Official:

Program Contact:

Background:

Tentative Charge:

Tentative Schedule and Committee:

Budget:

FY 1995 - \$xxx and yy FTE

FY 1996 - \$xxx and yy FTE

FY 1997 - \$xxx and yy FTE

FY 1998 - \$xxx and yy FTE

FY 1999 - FY2000 - estimated costs of \$xxx and yy FTE each year

Preparer:

Date: